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A Portrait of the Intern As a...um...Youngish Man; or, My Semester in Acquisitions and Collection Development

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The Nexus of Acquisitions...

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review of collection development guidelines and methodology would be useful. The acquisitions librarian needs to understand the various responsibilities many subject librarians juggle. Should this fit into a library's organizational structure, the acquisitions librarian should be available as a resource for data gathering or provide other assistance when necessary. And, as always, a sense of humor is necessary regardless of specialization!

Contributors to the discussion come from a wide variety of libraries and backgrounds to discuss this relationship. What makes this issue fascinating is that three types of libraries are represented in the discussion, from academic libraries of varying sizes, to a large public library system and a special library. One contributor is a faculty member at the **College of DuPage** in the Library Technical Assistant training program. Another contributor is still wet behind the ears: he's a graduating library science student from the **University of Arkansas** completing an internship in both collection development and acquisitions.

Aline Soules from the **University of California**, East Bay, discusses various organizational structures and different issues that need to be addressed when determining the best fit for acquisitions. A library's strategic plan, size, geography, use of technology (as a tool and information delivery method), relationship of functions, and the relationship of the library to central administration are all factors to consider when optimizing the position of acquisitions within the library.

Barbara Blummer, the librarian at the **Center for Computing Sciences**, analyzes the relationship between acquisitions and collection development, and finds that, of the ties that bind, not surprisingly technology is the strongest. The Internet and constantly improving integrated library systems have provided libraries with invaluable opportunities to share information and streamline workflow. Writing from the **Fort Worth Public Library**, **Deborah Duke** remembers that invisible line in the sand between collection management and technical services, and the painstaking steps in ordering, receiving and processing books. After the advent of the Internet, and other changes in the library world, the **Fort Worth Public Library** has created a unique structure in a collection management unit that has collapsed the distinctions between the two areas into a strong, interdependent relationship including cataloging and processing.

Linda K. Lewis and **Nancy Pistorius**, from the **University of New Mexico**, unveil the mystery behind acquisitions in their piece describing what collection development librarians should know about acquisitions. And yes, there are days where I wish I could pull out a crystal ball and say when that book will come in! **JoAnn Hrabak** describes her teaching method, **ACQCITY**, for introducing students in her acquisitions class to the philosophy and work behind collection development. In the class, the students, through collaboration, learn that collection development provides the backbone of the library's mission. **Ben Buetler** is a graduating library science student from **Arizona State University**. In his essay, he reflects on his experience as an intern and some of the valuable lessons he's learned through his projects, among which he recounts the miraculous load balanc-

ing of many librarians with collection development responsibilities and the joy of licensing and negotiation.

Antje Mays is the Head of Acquisitions at **Winthrop University** and reflects on the two sides of the coin: collection development as the intellectual side, and acquisitions as the business side. She discusses the characteristics needed to succeed in both areas, training scenarios, and describes two examples of collaboration between the acquisitions librarian and the collection development librarian in the approval plan and budget planning.

It's a wide-ranging issue, granted. But there are many points to consider when examining the relationship between the two areas. Sometimes there's tension and misunderstandings when there's miscommunication. But when we succeed, which is most of the time, it's the result of a multifaceted amalgamation of organization, technology, training and communication. 🐼

References

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A Portrait of the Intern As a...um...Youngish Man; or, My Semester in Acquisitions and Collection Development

by **Ben Beutler** (Graduate, School of Information Resources and Library Science, University of Arizona) <benbeutler@gmail.com>



When I phoned my mom and told her I was going to be an intern, she burst into tears. It took a few minutes to figure out that she thought I meant *internist* and was weeping for joy because I'd finally come to my senses and decided to go into medicine. When I explained that, no, I was still studying Library Science and would be interning at an academic library, she sobered quickly.

"Aren't you a little old to be an intern?"

"No mom," not willing to admit I'd had that same thought myself.

"And you'll be doing what?"

I didn't have a good answer for that one. I was about to begin an internship at the **Arizona State University (ASU)** at the West campus' **Fletcher Library**, focusing on acquisitions and collection development. This I knew for sure; beyond that fact everything was still a bit fuzzy.

To be honest, I was worried. I had done a summer internship during my undergraduate years. I was studying public relations at **Brigham Young University** and had an opportunity to work for a PR agency in Hong Kong. This wasn't just an internship: it was an adventure! After only a few weeks of working at the agency I was convinced of two things—**McDonalds** is just as bad in China as it is in America, and public relations is not for me. So it was with some degree of trepidation that I had decided to do an internship during my last semester of graduate school. As it turned out, my fears were groundless.

But the question remained: What would I be doing? I had taken a Collection Development class, so I thought I had a pretty good idea about what was involved there. Acquisitions, on the other hand, had been one chapter in the

Collection Development textbook with little in-class discussion on the topic. As I've met more librarians, I've discovered that this oversight of acquisitions is not uncommon. Many in our own profession, with years of experience, are similarly uncertain as to what exactly acquisitions is. It seems to belong to a shadowy corner of librarianship that is easily overlooked, much like the hotel housekeeping staff whose presence is only hinted at by clean towels in the bathroom and fresh linens on the bed.

Appropriately, upon arriving for my first day at **ASU's** West campus I was led to my office on the library's lower level. I was right next to the office of my study advisor, **Smita Joshipura**, **Fletcher Library's** good-natured Acquisitions Librarian. I wasn't sure if my location there was for convenience or whether they

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felt like they had to keep a close eye on me. I still haven't figured that one out. Certainly it has been convenient for me. The answer to any question I had was mere footsteps away. And there have been plenty of questions.

Ms. Joshipura started me off with a three-week training program. I spent time, usually about an hour, with every employee that has anything to do with acquisitions. We started off with monographs. I learned about firm orders and approval plans. I learned about the importance of keeping up-to-date subject profiles with the library's main vendor, **Blackwell North America (BNA)**. Those profiles are key to ensuring that the library's collection contains the most current and relevant monographs available. **Ms. Joshipura** took me with her to meet with one of the liaison librarians to update her profile on **BNA's Collection Manager** and to subscribe her for electronic notification (e-notes) of new titles—replacing the old printed approval forms from **BNA**. This was a fairly painless process. It is generally the liaisons' responsibility to manage their own profiles, but since most of them shoulder a workload that would make **Atlas** cringe, it is the acquisitions librarian's job to provide assistance when needed. This is one of the many acquisitions responsibilities that may not be listed in the job description.

I spent less time on other aspects of monograph management—special orders, receiving, and cataloging (done at **ASU** at the Tempe campus' **Hayden Library**.) I don't know what I was expecting, but I was surprised by how similar the processes of ordering and receiving books are between libraries and bookstores. I spent several years as a manager for **Barnes & Noble**, and other than the profiles, the process is virtually the same. Price, unfortunately, is a different matter: national bookstore chains usually receive a vendor discount of 40–45% on book orders, even on single title special orders. Libraries, alas, are not the revenue generators that bookstores are.

If I was comfortable with the process of ordering monographs, I was in for a shock when I moved into the world of serials. I was amazed to discover that roughly 60% of the acquisitions budget went to serials. In this respect, a walk through the library is deceiving. Monographs may be found on all three floors, while print journals occupy a small section with media and microfiche. Welcome to the world of the electronic resource. As anyone reading this knows far better than I, online journals and electronic databases are no longer the wave of the future. They are very much the present in academic libraries.

I'm not going to try to explain the whole acquisitions process for serials. For print serials, much of the process involves the same steps as monograph acquisition, only more so. Tracking outstanding issues and filing claims seem to be time-consuming tasks. This

is one reason that some libraries are eliminating the check-in of print serials and simplifying the claims process (Anderson, Davis, and Zink, 2003).

A library's collection of online journals is mostly leased content that is governed by license agreements entered into between the library and a publisher/vendor. Part of my first month was spent studying a series of online tutorials on license agreements. Since that initial training, one of my projects has been to review license agreements of electronic packages to which **ASU** subscribes. I've been checking them for language identifying special conditions, end user notices, remote access, electronic course reserves, etc. While most are similar in many respects, each vendor has its own unique agreement. The main point I took away from the tutorials was threefold: read each agreement carefully, never assume anything, and negotiate aggressively. **Fletcher** is a community use library, so it is important that any agreement **ASU** enters into allows for these users; something for which many standard agreements do not provide. But all, or at the very least, most, things are negotiable. Over the course of the semester, **Ms. Joshipura** has been in negotiations with several vendors. Two in particular have been involved, drawn-out processes—for different reasons. During the course of negotiations, **Ms. Joshipura** reviewed various elements of the negotiation process with me. This experience has been more valuable by far than any pre-packaged tutorial.

Acquisitions is the business side of librarianship. I've read that in many textbooks, articles and listserv postings. As with most trite phrases, it is absolutely true. Budget tracking and projections are part of the acquisitions process. Providing statistics to the Collections Council and external agencies like **ARL**, as well as developing and running holdings queries for Liaisons or the Dean are all important acquisitions responsibilities.


Collection development has been a secondary area of focus for my internship. Mostly this has involved attending the semi-monthly Collections Council meetings. This council includes the liaison librarians and **Ms. Joshipura**. Listening to the discussions in these meetings has given me an insight into academic librarianship that I'm not sure I could have gotten any other way. One line of discussion was the need to update much of the media collection from obsolete laserdiscs to DVDs. I volunteered to check the laserdisc titles against available DVDs and thus created a project for myself. It was mostly busywork, but at the same time I knew someone was going to have to do it, so why not me? And I must admit it is somewhat gratifying to see some of the DVD titles I researched show up in Receiving.

My other collection development project involved reviewing accessibility to electronic journals. One thing that seems to be constant in the world of electronic serials is change. A journal title that was exclusively available through **Ebsco's Academic Search Premier**

database last year might only be available through **JSTOR** this year. This requires periodic review of serials holdings and accessibility, since the library might have an agreement with **Ebsco**, but not with **JSTOR** (**ASU** does). That could mean the library has lost access to several important journals without really knowing it. Thus, my project of checking accessibility in preparation of upcoming serials review by the Collections Council; a project simplified greatly by **ASU's** subscription to **Serials Solution**.

One of the most important lessons I have learned from my internship has nothing to do with acquisitions or collection development. On my first day as an intern, I had the opportunity to attend a presentation given by a candidate for an open liaison librarian position. As I entered the classroom, I picked up a copy of the interview schedule. I was stunned. As a retail bookstore manager I interviewed hundreds of people, most of which lasted less than an hour. The schedule in my hand described a two-day interview process. I certainly hadn't learned about this in library school! A quick consultation with **Ms. Joshipura** confirmed this was the norm. Now I find myself searching for my first library position, something that falls somewhere between root canal work and being kicked in the head by a horse on the fun meter. At least I know what to expect when I finally get that first interview in an academic environment.

These types of experiences were an added bonus of doing an internship at a smaller academic library. I was also able to squeeze in some time training and working at the reference desk. My customer-service oriented retail background made this the most comfortable of all my tasks. **Ms. Joshipura** works the reference desk for a few hours each week and she repeatedly emphasized how important it is for acquisitions librarians to interact with end-users. No amount of free trials and vendor training sessions can compare with the experience of assisting students or faculty in their research.

As the semester comes to a close it is time to evaluate my internship experience. Was it successful? I think so. First and foremost, I still want to be a librarian. I know I've learned more about the way an academic library works this semester than the rest of my time as a grad student put together. I know a lot more about acquisitions and collection development, particularly acquisitions, than I ever learned in any of my courses (nothing against library school, but practical experience is hard to beat). I know enough to want to pursue a position in acquisitions. I guess the true success will depend on whether my experience helps me land an acquisitions position in an academic library; at least, that's what my mom says. 

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